

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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sustainindy

CITY BRINGS SEWER SERVICE TO MORE THAN 1,100 HOMES IN 2009

Septic Tank Elimination Program to bring sewer service to an additional 1,200 homes in 2010

INDIANAPOLIS – Five Indianapolis neighborhoods and more than 1,100 residents are enjoying sanitary sewers thanks to the city's Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP). In 2009, the Department of Public Works (DPW), through its STEP program, worked to construct sanitary sewers and eliminate septic systems on the city's south and eastside.

"This is one of the most aggressive schedules the city has ever had to eliminate the use of septic systems," said Mayor Greg Ballard. "Failing systems are a health hazard and this is really more of a quality of life issue than anything else."

In 2009, under the direction of Mayor Ballard, DPW re-prioritized planned sewer projects and pushed the schedule forward to eliminate more septic systems than any other time in the city's history. Through STEP, the city anticipates bringing sewers to more than 7,000 homes from 2009 through 2013.

Areas receiving sewers in 2009 included neighborhoods near:

- Eustis Drive and Michigan Street
- Post Road and Rawles Avenue
- Franklin Road and Southeastern Avenue
- Northern Estates
- 10th Street and Mitthoeffer Road

Project costs totaled approximately \$30 million. STEP projects are funded through sanitary sewer user fees. In addition, homeowners pay a one-time connection fee for the construction of city sewers and monthly sewer charges. Project areas received new sanitary sewers, manholes, street resurfacing and incidental drainage improvements.

"We are making progress toward eliminating septic systems, but there are still about 26,000 homes in the city that are serviced by private septic systems," said DPW Director David Sherman. "What people don't always realize is that septic systems eventually fail and when they do, human waste can leach into groundwater, backyards, neighborhood ditches and streams."

(more)

Septic systems are linked to high *E. coli* bacteria counts in many neighborhood streams and ditches during dry weather, when children are most likely to play in them. Some septic tank owners get their drinking water from private wells, which can be vulnerable to contamination by *E. coli* bacteria.

In 2010, the city plans to complete six projects and convert close to 1,200 homes from septic systems to the city's sanitary sewer system. In addition, six projects will be in construction in 2010, which will result in the elimination of an additional 1,800 septic systems in 2011.

The STEP program is part of the city's Clean Streams-Healthy Neighborhoods program, which is designed to curb raw sewage overflows into rivers and streams, address chronic flooding, eliminate failing septic tanks and improve quality of life in Indianapolis neighborhoods.

For information on when a STEP project is planned for a particular area, please visit www.indy.gov/STEP or call (317) 327-8314.

Mayor Ballard launched SustainIndy and created the Office of Sustainability in October of 2008. Both represent an innovative enterprise aimed at delivering long-term cost savings to the city, building the local economy, improving our quality of life and enhancing our environmental and public health. Its efforts are designed to aggressively move Indianapolis forward in making it one of the most sustainable cities in the Midwest. For more information, visit www.sustainindy.org.



Eustis/Michigan STEP Project